Information Operations: An Army Perspective to Leveraging Combat Capabilities

By Brian S. Rahn, Major, U.S. Army

Editorial Abstract: *Thoroughly integrated and coordinated information operations can be an effective combat force multiplier. Major Rahn, writing from the perspective of an Army Corp level staff officer, provides a systematic approach to planning and monitoring the execution of IO that has applicability to joint operations at both the strategic theater and operational levels.*

The Operation

The 4th Infantry Division (ID) recently conducted a Battle Command Training Program Warfighter Exercise (WFX) at Fort Hood, Texas, in which the Deep Operations Coordination Cell (DOCC) at the Corps Main Command Post (MCP) was an integral component of the exercise. In this configuration the Corps Information Operations (IO) Integration Center (IOIC) became a prominent player in helping set the conditions for the ensuing tactical operations of the Division. In this environment, the IOIC made great strides in developing battle staff procedures to effectively conduct day-to-day operations in support of the fight and to raise the level of awareness for the functions of IO within the Corps. This article addresses the battle staff procedures developed for the IOIC to plan and execute operations in support of the fight, how the III Corps IOIC was organized for effective operations, and some conclusions concerning effective integration of IO into Corps operations.

The following provides a framework for the Corps' operations. The Corps conducted a forward passage of lines and then an attack as part of an Army's attack that focused on the destruction of a robustly and similarly equipped enemy. The enemy's long-range artillery was assessed as its Center of Gravity (COG). The destruction of the enemy's 2d Operational Echelon (OE) and Operational Reserve was considered the Decisive Point of the Corps' operations. The Corps relied heavily on its aviation assets to strike deep to destroy long-range artillery. This framework provided the template for the Corps' IO staff to conduct its planning and coordinate its execution.

Using the Military Decision Making Process the Corps' IO staff developed objectives that directly addressed the Commander's Intent. The objectives were focused on supporting the fights deemed critical by the Corps. Conveniently, each objective could be effectively applied in each critical fight. These fights included the rapid penetration of the lengthy security zone, defeat of the 1st OE, and then the destruction of the 2d OE and Operational Reserve. By effectively synchronizing the elements and related activities of IO into the Corps's attack and defense during these critical fights IO contributed directly to the Corps' successful mission accomplishment. (see Chart 2 for further details) As a result of the situation, the IO planning was complex and required significant effort to effectively coordinate and synchronize IO with the Corps' operations.

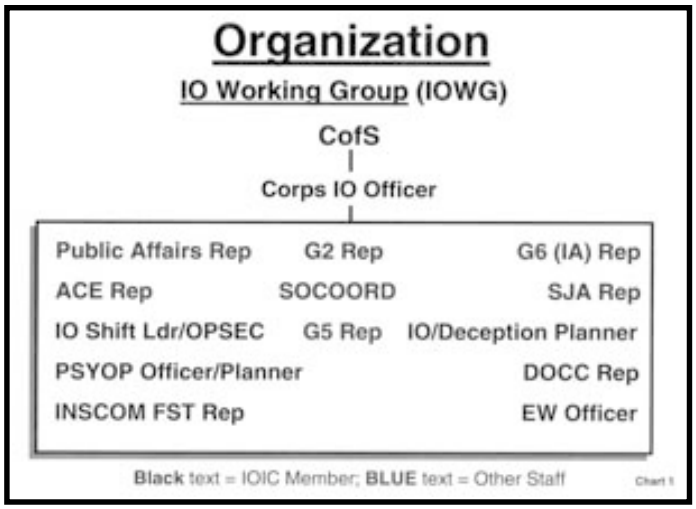
During the planning of the tactical operations the IO planning staff found themselves focusing their efforts first on how IO would be integrated to support the critical fights identified during the war game process. Next, they looked at how they would aid in supporting the destruction of the enemy's COG while protecting their own COG in a given critical fight. Finally, they considered how they would execute IO to measurably influence the friendly and enemy decision points identified during those fights. Accomplishing these tasks involved close coordination between and within the IO staff, G2, and G3 to ensure proper focus and appropriate support in the planning and execution of IO.

Following the process of identifying critical fights, focusing on the COGs, and keying on the friendly and enemy decision points, a technique employed by the III Corps IO staff, the IOIC was able to incorporate its IO plan into the Corps' overall operation. Concurrently, the IO staff could specifically identify how each IO task related back to the IO objectives, an imperative to determining and demonstrating the relevance of IO.

The process described above allowed for a systematic approach to battle. Each IO task could be traced back to an IO objective and the incorporation of the IO scheme of support could easily be linked to the overall scheme of maneuver. In this form the Command Group (CG) could quickly determine how and why IO actions contributed to the fight. Ultimately, this entire process became a reliable technique for the IO staff to approach its planning.

The Process

The III Corps IOIC was functionally organized to staff each element of IO throughout the planning and execution of the exercise. The Corps requested and gained external support from the Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA). LIWA personnel provided support for Military Deception, Electronic Warfare (EW), Operations Security, and IO targeting as well as planning and execution expertise. The Reserve Component



provided support for Psychological Operations (PSYOP). Additionally, the Corps employed the requisite Fire Support Coordination, Civil Affairs (CA) and Public Affairs (PA) personnel to round out the IO elements and related activities. In this configuration, the IOIC was capable of supporting the doctrinal elements of IO while providing support to the Corps' continuous operations. Possessing the appropriate number of personnel, skills, and resources significantly aided in the IO effort by allowing for detailed analysis, planning, coordination, synchronization, and execution.

In this exercise the process occurring in the DOCC became the center of attention for the IOIC. The focus of IO was setting conditions for 4ID's close fight by closely coordinating with the DOCC for deep attacks on enemy information and information systems such as air defense and field artillery command and control (C2) nodes. The purpose of these efforts was to focus lethal and nonlethal fires on degrading or destroying enemy information and information assets. In doing so, the information and information assets could not be effectively utilized in the close fight, thus setting the conditions for 4ID's attack.

The DOCC process involved coordination with the Corps' aviation and artillery assets as well as Echelon Above Corps (EAC) EW, PSYOP, and air interdiction assets to strike deep in order to set conditions for 4ID's close fight. This condition setting, from an IO perspective, focused on destroying the enemy's information systems associated with long-range artillery assets in order to aid in the destruction of the enemy's COG and set conditions for the close fight.

To determine if conditions were set for the close fight the Corps staff used Battle Damage Assessment Reports (BDAR) and intelligence indicators to assess friendly effects on enemy operations. The Corps determined conditions, strength of the enemy COG, to be set when the long-range artillery was reduced to twenty percent or less. The IO staff concentrated on the command and control aspects of the enemy long-range artillery such as its counter-battery radars and communication's networks, however it did not adequately address the definition of success for IO and instead relied on the Corps' definition of success.

During the Warfighter, the IOIC not only concentrated on offensive IO actions but also conducted defensive actions in support of operations. Key to success in the defense was the destruction of enemy Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RISTA). Enemy RISTA provided critical information like high value asset (HVA) and troop concentration locations as targeting data for the enemy long-range artillery. Destruction of the RISTA assisted in preserving friendly combat power for the decisive point by protecting the Corps' HVA and troops from coordinated enemy deep fires because they could not obtain target fidelity in the friendly area of operation. The defensive measures were accomplished primarily through aggressive counter-reconnaissance, operations security, and military deception. PSYOP, PA and CA also contributed to the IO defensive efforts by countering enemy propaganda and maintaining the support of the local populace.

The IOIC, with the support of the Corps' Command Group, became an integral part of the physical structure of the MCP during the rehearsal for this exercise. The IOIC operated from its own workspace, a Life Support System trailer and rig that was located directly across from the DOCC and adjacent to G3 Operations and the G2 Analysis and Collections Element. The proximity to the G2 and G3 and the other supporting functions allowed for the close coordination that was necessary to plan and execute IO within the Corps. In this environment, not only was the IOIC within easy reach of important information, but more importantly, the IOIC maintained access to key decision-makers such as the Chief of Staff and the CG to brief them on a daily basis and keep them apprised of the status of the Corps' IO effort and plans.

IO Battle Rhythm

Time	Event	Responsible
0500	Prep BUB Input	Shift Leader
0600	Pre-Targeting Meeting	EW/PSYOP Officers
0700	BUB Input Due	Shift Leader
0800	BUB	IO Chief
0800	Targeting Meeting	EW/PSYOP Officers
0900	Plans Update to CG	IO Chief
	Shift Change	Shift Leader
1000	Prep CG IO Update	Shift Leader
1100	Review IOWG Brief	IO Chief
1200	Deep Ops Decision Brief	EW/PSYOP Officers
	Review CG IO Brief	IO Chief
1400	IO Working Group	IO Chief
1500	ITO Nominations Due	EW/PSYOP Officers
	Deep Atk Sync Meeting	EW/PSYOP Officers
1600	Review CG IO Brief	IO Chief
1700	Prep BUB Input	Shift Leader
1800	Download ITO	Shift Leader
1900	BUB Input Due	Shift Leader
	Deep Atk Go/No-Go Brief	Shift Leader
2000	BUB	IO Chief
2100	Plans/IO Update	IO Chief
	Shift Change	Shift Leader
2130	Prep IOWG	Shift Leader

Chart 3

IO Objective to Task Matrix

IO Objective				
Military Deception				
Electronic Warfare				
Operations Security				
Physical Destruction				
Psychological Operations				
Public Affairs				
Civil Affairs				

Chart 2

Comprehensive sample of tasks performed by the elements and related activities of III Corps Information Operations Integration Center during the 4th Infantry Division's Warfighter.

The IOIC made itself highly visible within the Corps during five daily events that ensured IO were integrated into the Corps' operations. (See Chart 3 for further details) The events included a twice-daily Battle Update Brief (BUB) and Plan's brief to the CG, an entire DOCC cycle process, an IO Working Group (IOWG), and an IO update briefing presented directly to the CG.

During the BUB, IO staff briefed signi-ficant IO activities that occurred during the last 12 hours and critical upcoming ati-vities to ensure IO was presented with a focused and integrated perspective. However, much of the information pertinent to IO, such as leaflet drops and electronic attack by air component assets, or potential enemy responses to IO actions or activities was presented by other staff elements. The IO staff with the other appropriate staffs like the Air Force, DOCC, and G2 closely coordinated these activities and information to ensure adequate planning and seamless execution. This arrangement was beneficial because it ensured IO was being addressed throughout the Corps.

The DOCC process was the most critical event IO attended and conducted. The process began with an update of the friendly and enemy situation out to 72 hours. Targets were selected and nominated for submission to the Air Tasking Order (ATO) being planned and then earlier nominations were validated as still necessary. This was where PSYOP and EW, as force multipliers, enhanced the Corps' use of deep operations in condition setting for the division's close fight. Also by following this procedure, IO ensured that its activities were incorporated with the Corps' operations and focused on the main effort. Another benefit to DOCC integration was the level of visibility afforded PSYOP and EW in the Corps' operations since the end product of the DOCC was approved by the CG.

The daily IOWG meeting was the prime time for the members of the IOIC to plan and refine IO. (See chart 1 for IOWG organization) The IOWG followed a briefing template that focused on planning for the time period 72-96 hours in the future and reviewing operations that were closer in time. This allowed the IO elements to plan for Corps' deep operations prior to the DOCC meeting that planned the next ATO cycle. The IOWG drew the tasks it executed from its analysis of the Corps's planning and intelligence. The IOWG ensured its plans were incorporated with those of the Corps by showing a direct correlation between the IO objectives, supporting objectives, and related tasks.

The final event that proved to be very beneficial to the IOIC was a daily briefing presented directly to the CG. Because the CG took the briefing later in the evening, it allowed the IOIC ample time to compile and prepare the necessary information. The information showed the immediate effects of IO on the previous 24 hours' operations, as derived from BDAR and intelligence indicators from throughout the staff, and what was planned in the upcoming 48-72 hour time period. Developing this information required close coordination between the IO staff and members of the III Corps staff. During this meeting the CG could personally focus on the Corps's IO and provide guidance to the IO staff on expectations and desired results. The two-way exchange benefited the IOIC by gaining insight and direct feedback from the CG. The exchange also benefited the Corps by focusing the IOIC efforts on the Commander's intent and support of the overall operation.

The IOIC possessed a multitude of tools to draw upon to prosecute the planning and execution of IO in support of the Corps' scheme of maneuver. The IOIC relied upon information that the Corps processed, analyzed, and displayed. Of primary importance was the Common Tactical Picture (CTP). This CTP display was fed into the IOIC's workspace and gave the IOIC a graphic portrayal of the friendly and enemy situation. The other key piece of technology was the Tactical Local Area Network (TACLAN). The TACLAN provided the members of the IOIC with the connectivity to find information critical to making timely decisions and assessments. Finally, the IOIC had the BUB piped into its workspace when it was briefed every day. These information systems aided immensely in the IOIC's ability to develop and maintain situational awareness as it conducted planning and operations.

Conclusion

As a result of the IOIC's integration into the Corps' operations, the command used another powerful tool within its grasp to effectively influence mission accomplishment. Notable lessons learned demonstrate that the IOIC must focus on those critical areas where it can make a difference given its minimal manning and broad tasks. The IOIC should focus its planning and execution on targeting decision points and COGs in a given critical fight to ensure IO is effectively engaging events and capabilities that can influence the outcome of the mission. Also, the IOIC must be able to show that it is incorporating its efforts

with the overall plan by linking its tasks back to the IO objectives. This linkage must show how the IO scheme of support incorporates appropriately with the overall scheme of maneuver. Finally, demonstrating the results of IO efforts in the form of effects such as enemy surrenders, civilian cooperation, increased enemy reaction time, identified enemy disorganization, or lack of appropriate systems' engage-ments to name a few, shows how IO positively contributes to mission accomplishment.

Information Operations at the Corps level are an effective combat multiplier. The Corps, more than any of its subordinate organizations, is able to bring together all the elements of IO and effectively use them to set conditions for its operations. The Corps must take full advantage of this capability and maximize IO effects by leveraging the capabilities they provide with their full utilization. Ultimately, full utilization will result in the conservation of friendly combat power for use at the decisive point of an operation.

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Career field designated as a psychological operations (PSYOP) officer, MAJ Rahn is also Ranger qualified and a Master Parachutist. He has three years experience with the 4th PSYOP Group (Airborne) in which he commanded tactical PSYOP detachments and a regional PSYOP company at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. MAJ Rahn's operational experience includes service in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait; JTF-ANDREW, Florida; JTF-BRAVO, Honduras; Operation NOBLE ANVIL, Germany and England; and counter-drug operations in South and Central America.